



Newsletter of the African Burial Ground & Five Points Archaeological Projects

UPDATE

Spring 1998

Vol. 2 No. 6

Update, the newsletter of the African Burial Ground and Five Points Archaeological Projects, is published by the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground (OPEI), at 6 World Trade Ctr., Rm. 239, New York, NY 10048, (212) 432-5707, e-mail address: NYABG@worldnet.att.net, for the purpose of providing current information on New York City's African Burial Ground and its historical context.

Editor-in-Chief: Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D.

Senior Editor/
Design & Layout: Emilyn L. Brown

Contributors: Emilyn L. Brown
Stephen Coleman
Tamara R. Jubilee
Warren D. Perry, Ph.D.
Chadra D. Pittman
Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D.

Technical Assist.: Donna Harden Cole,
Deinabo George, Tamara R. Jubilee,
Chadra D. Pittman, Leona Shuler

OPEI CELEBRATES 6TH ANNIVERSARY!

Greetings Update Readers,

The Office of Public Education & Interpretation of the African Burial Ground (OPEI) celebrates its sixth anniversary on May 14, and May 16th, 1998. The OPEI has disseminated information to the New York African descendent community and the public-at-large on the ongoing status of this historic landmark, eighteenth century African Burial Ground site, beginning May 1993.

The scientific findings and historical research being conducted at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and at the Foley Square Archaeological Laboratory in New York City as a result of the 1991-1992 African Burial Ground archaeological excavation in lower Manhattan, will challenge us all to rewrite New York's history. This revision will include the long denied history of slavery in the North and the long forgotten voices of those African ancestors who helped to build New York. The research questions for the overall African Burial Ground Project continue to be investigated in search of answers. **Where in Africa did those buried in the African Burial Ground originate? What was the quality of life for enslaved Africans living in colonial New York? How did Africans become African Americans? How did the enslaved actively resist their enslavement?**

The historical research and analysis of the human remains continues and the mission of the OPEI to disseminate the answers to those questions proceeds. By way of the Update newsletters and other educational materials, slide presentations, documentary film showings, and educators symposia, we remain dedicated to the task before us. Join us in the celebration of remembering the lives, the deaths and the voices of our ancestors.

Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D.
Director

In This Issue...

Archaeological Update from the Foley Square Laboratory.....	3
African Burial Ground Project Profile.....	6
Memorialization Office Update.....	7
Community Voices.....	10
Book Review.....	13

and more!

"I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that his justice cannot sleep forever... Nothing is more clearly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free." -- Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826)



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Young Students Speak Out

I think that the stuff about the African Burial Ground is amazing. The bullet, handle of a knife and a whole bunch of other stuff is very interesting. I had fun on this trip, but the stuff that I saw and heard I did not like one bit because I feel sorry for all those people who died over stupidness because they had to be enslaved and work all day and night. Plus, it was even harder for them because there was no food for them to eat or drink. They had to work for days, weeks, years without nothing. So me, I'm happy that most of these people are resting in peace and hope they don't get disturbed again. In other words, I just want them to be left alone and rest in peace.

Lilian Lane
River East Elementary School
New York City

I enjoyed the tour you gave us. My favorite part was when we looked at the pictures. I liked the picture of the mother and the two children because it was interesting how the bones were placed. I also liked when we went to the artifacts room. The most interesting thing was the bullet because it looked like a bead and I couldn't believe a little thing like that could kill somebody. I have learned a lot of things that I never knew before.

Jatayia
River East Elementary School
New York City

Compliments

Thank you for giving a most interesting slide presentation at The Historical Society of Rockland County. Learning about the African Burial Ground archaeological dig and scientific research at Howard University as well as getting a glimpse at life for enslaved and free Africans in 18th century New York are important to the study of New York State history. I look forward to learning more about the African Burial Ground from upcoming newsletters.

Jennifer C. Griffin, Curator
Historical Society of Rockland Cty.

I received your information on the African Burial Ground and I found it very informative, exhilarating and inspirational. This discovery is truly a victory for us Afrikans here in America because it's very rare that we stumble across such an opportunity to learn a part of our glorious history. I can easily see that the future results of this project will be profound in the sense of the black community appreciating their heritage, and making attempts to redefine our history devoid of external influence.

Anthony Williams
Waynesburg, PA. 15370-8090

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of the Newsletter of the African Burial Ground & Five Points Archaeological Projects." The progenitor of my family, Dr. Hans Kierstede, was employed by the Dutch West India Company as a surgeon in the mid-1600s, therefore this newsletter is a welcome source of information for that period of time. The edition I received of your newsletter is Vol. 2, No. 5. Is there any way of obtaining all the back issues?

Roy Kierstead
Pensacola, Florida

[Ed. note: Since 1993, we have published a total of 18 newsletters. All back issues of Update are available by telephone or written request]

African Burial Ground inspires poetry

In response to your gift of your Educational Portfolio, I had been musing over writing a poem dedicated to your project. It is not easy to mix creative writing with the factual details of history, but I have somewhat overcome some of the difficulties, and have managed to compose a poem for your project and our ancestors...Wishing you continued success in your work I remain...

Very truly yours,
Mario Armando Maldonado
Walkill, New York

[Ed. note: See poetry on page 14]

A recommendation

I have recently been informed of the project. I am pleased to know that the wheels are in motion on such an important cause. The African Burial Ground is a large part of the New York history. People sometimes don't understand the heritage of this memorial. I would like to recommend honoring these people with sculptures that African Americans have made since they come from the same heritage. Also the walls of the buildings should have poems and research of the history from Howard University. Something like that will elegantly show the beauty and significance of our ancestors.

Allie Calnan
New York, N.Y.

**OPEI welcomes letters but reserves
the right to edit for length or clarity.**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL UPDATE FROM THE FOLEY SQUARE LABORATORY

Warren D. Perry, Ph.D.

The African Burial Ground Project archaeologists are continuing to organize and synthesize the archaeological materials housed at the Foley Square archaeology laboratory. We are currently organizing and cataloguing the grave fill artifacts to prepare them for identification and analysis. All wood samples have been organized, their distribution plotted on the burial map and samples have been identified by conservators (see Update Issue Vol. 2, No. 2). We have nearly completed the entry of all field notes into our database, and are developing an efficient format for reporting these notes and comments. We are continuing to use the information from this basic inventory to modify the Howard University database to structure provenience and coffin data and serve other archaeological data management needs. Analysis of the burial related artifacts depends on developing precise data on their provenience. This information can help us to understand the relative chronological sequence of the burials, and the spatial distribution of archaeological materials. What follows is a description of some selected tasks underway, along with some preliminary analysis of the archaeological data.

Spatial Analysis of Burials

The land where Africans were allowed to bury their dead was beyond the palisades of New York in a marshy setting that the Dutch and the British colonists found undesirable, and was used as a "buffer" zone to protect Europeans

from Native American reprisals and resistance during the 17th century. This may have affected the ideal interment of deceased Africans, creating a constrictive spatial arrangement.

In addition to being marginal to the European settlement, the African Burial Ground was located next to the Collect Pond. For people from coastal Africa, water plays an important role in purification rites. Furthermore, the remote location of the burial ground away from the colonial settlement provided African captives with a degree of privacy not found elsewhere. Finally, the location of the African Burial Ground near the farms granted to Africans by the Dutch West India Company during the 1640s may have added greater significance of land ownership and pride of place. Thus, the cemetery's location is possibly one of the earliest African New York communities. When we start to look at spatial patterning, graves and grave goods we are, in effect, analyzing the cultural practices of the living community and their ideas of socio-cultural roles of the living and the dead. Several kinds of diversity are evident among the 427 burials.

Preliminary recordation of body orientations in all burials has been completed, and needs to be evaluated for errors. We are continuing a horizontal analysis of the burials based on coffin shapes, burial orientation, based on the four cardinal directions, sex and age differences, their relationship to one another and to burial ground fea-

tures. An understanding of the socio-cultural uses of space will contribute to an understanding of the active role Africans played in creating a social identity or identities in the 18th century and how these changed through time.

Many of the burials involve women in contexts we initially believe to be multiple burials. Preliminary stratigraphic analysis has shown that out of 427 burials, approximately 11 are adults interred with children. Of this number, 7 are women with children or "sub-adults."

The biological team is currently refining the demographic category of sub-adults into the following categories: fetal < birth), infants (birth-3 years), children (3-12 years), adolescents (12-20 years). Adults are categorized as follows: young adults (20-35 years), middle adults (35-50 years), and old adults (50 + years). This information will enhance the spatial analyses and interpretations of burial patterns.

A cursory examination also indicates that although individuals of all ages and both sexes are distributed throughout the entire burial ground population, children and infants appear to rarely if ever, be buried under adults. Because stratigraphic analysis is very problematic we must emphasize that our discussions are very preliminary as to numbers and these numbers may change as research continues.

Ecofact Analysis

Soil samples selected according to demographic characteristics and

other variables like coffin shape, and burial location within the grave pits, can provide numerous kinds of informative data. For example, botanical remains from coffin lid soil samples can yield evidence of burial rituals like floral tributes used for burial offerings. Furthermore, they can be compared to soil samples from outside of the burial contexts.

Stomach samples can provide evidence of food residue indicating dietary patterns (often characteristic of distinct ethnic groups), while thoracic samples (from the chest cavity area) can reveal pathological organisms yielding evidence of health, disease and nutrition. Finally, sacrum samples (from the area of the intestines) can indicate parasite infestations, pathological organisms and calcified organic material yielding evidence of overall health, disease, and nutrition at the time of death.

Data from the soil samples outside of the coffin will be used to obtain information on the season of interment and the environmental conditions at the time of the burial. Soil samples can yield information on the taphonomic processes (processes which affect remains during the time they are in the ground such as erosion, disturbance by later digging, or the actions of soil acids or bacteria which cause bone to decompose) that acted upon the site and the skeletal remains. For instance, chemical analysis of soil samples from burial pits will provide data on pH (acid level) and macroscopic analysis of insect remains providing information on the physical degeneration of the bone. Finally, soil sample analysis may allow us to identify "natural" or cultural factors responsible for post-mortem movement of burials.

The first African Burial Ground soil samples sent to specialists for exploratory analyses of microfaunal (small animals), palynological (fossil pollen), and parasitological (fossil parasites) specimens has been received. The flotation (method of screening archaeological material in water) of soil samples has revealed ornamental flowers, plants with medicinal properties, and probable stomach contents, including wheat, oats, barley, and rye seeds. We are arranging the completion of this work on additional samples. We are currently plotting the distribution of burials whose soil samples have been identified. These will be used to help identify a 25% sample from the remaining burial related soil samples to be sent out for further analysis.

Artifact Identification and Analysis

There are approximately 500 artifacts from within the coffins at the African Burial Ground. In addition, there are artifacts from the grave shafts that must be studied to see if they were part of grave offerings or material from the grave fill. We believe that no more than 100 artifacts still requiring conservation or materials analysis will be selected from the collection. We expect to need about 400 x-rays of coffin hardware including coffin nails, of which there are hundreds. Conservation, materials analysis, and x-rays will be called for during final inventory.

Ecofacts (elements from the environment, such as seeds and shells that display evidence of human activity but not human manufacture) can also be artifacts when used to adorn the body, decorate or ritually commemorate a socio-cultural event such as a burial. At the African Burial Ground there are

11 individuals, 5 adults and 6 children associated with different types of seeds. Of the 6 children, 3 had seeds associated with their cranium. These seeds could represent either floral tributes, body decoration or ritual medicines. These seeds are being sent to the specialists to be identified.

Ecofacts can also become artifacts when they are given cultural meaning within people's belief systems. For instance, when natural objects symbolic of wealth and spiritual potency, such as cowrie and other seashells, some of which are not indigenous to New York, are found within burial contexts. Various marine shells have been recovered from both inside the coffin and on top of the coffin lid at the African Burial Ground. We know that shells send out multiple messages to the African American community. Besides representing objects of resistance, shells represent the maintenance of cultural practices, and provide tangible, artifactual evidence of direct African cultural transference. Furthermore, when found in association with other material culture items, such as perforated coins, and quartz crystals, shells are felt by many archaeologists to mark the African presence at sites in the Americas. These marine shells associated with burials, and the African Burial Ground's proximity to the Collect, all show reference to the sea, and served as a metaphor for water which we know from traditional African religious practices are a component of African spirituality and burial customs.

All shell thus far recovered has been counted, weighed, identified and entered into Howard's database. A large coral specimen associated with Burial 376, an adult man is of particular interest since

coral is not indigenous to New York. This is the most intact and recognizable specimen recovered from the African Burial Ground. Specialists using thin section microscopy were able to identify this specimen as the species, *Siderastrea siderea*. *S. Siderea* is found in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico, Bermuda, and possibly the Brazilian Coast, the Gulf of Guinea, or the West African Coast.

The majority of the artifacts are shroud pins and coffin nails. So far, there are a total of 127 individuals, representing 30% of the total population, that have been examined for evidence of shroud pins and/or textiles and/or buttons and cuff/sleeve links. Of these individuals believed to be wearing shrouds, 70 representing 55% are children or infants, 23 representing 18% are women and 24 representing 19% are men. There are another 10 persons representing 8% whose sex are indeterminate. This suggests that at least some adults were buried with both shrouds and clothing.

Other artifacts include grave markers, coffin handles, screws, tacks, buttons, copper-alloy rings, coins, glass beads, clam, oyster, cowrie shells, musket balls, pipes, ceramics, pocket knives, and other organic materials such as textiles. Many of these artifacts, like the broken salt glaze stoneware sherd with a blue spiral design motif placed on top of Burial 328, a women's coffin lid, are being investigated for evidence of African origin or inspiration.

The historical documents and the preliminary dating of the artifacts indicate an overall 18th century date for the African Burial Ground.

Standard artifact identification manuals, artifacts from various museum and university collections, along with published site reports from the same time period are being used to help identify probable African "donor" populations and to date and identify artifacts. In addition, ethnographic and historical sources are being investigated around questions of where, when and how specific objects were produced, decorated, and their functional and contextual use as well as their cultural significance. Particular attention will be paid to questions of context, artifactual distribution and associated objects.

Burial 371 is a woman buried with enamel coated copper alloy sleeve links with red, white and blue chevron and dot shapes resembling free Masonic symbols. Although the Masons included only men, they had an affiliated women's organization called the Prince Hall Chapter of the Eastern Star during the late 19th century. We know that Africans developed many fraternal orders and mutual aid associations in both the North and the South that offered material benefits to their members like burial and mutual aid societies. We are also investigating the use of similar symbols within African and Native American contexts.

We know that for Africans beads have protective and spiritual properties, and play a ceremonial role in African culture at each stage in the life cycle such as birth, puberty, initiation, marriage, elderhood, death and entry into the ancestral community. Different African cultural groups preferred particular bead types, patterns, and colors. Among African Americans, beads were especially important for the protection of infants and children

and when found in a mortuary context are most often associated with children, women and conjurors.

Blue beads also symbolize special meanings for African Americans. The archaeological record suggests that blue beads are the most commonly recurring color associated with African American residences in the 18-19th century U.S. South. Of the 12 individuals buried with beads at the African Burial Ground, 3 are men, 3 are women and 4 are children, and there are 2 whose sex is indeterminate. Burial 340 is a woman with modified teeth who was buried with cowrie shells and waist beads. She is the only burial with blue beads in the African Burial Ground population. A woman like Burial 340 who exhibits skeletal and material objects from Africa certainly implies some special social position in the African descendant community.

Conclusion

As we continue to investigate the archaeological materials, and their contexts at the Foley Square Laboratory, we undoubtedly will uncover new information, some of which may lead us to reconsider some of the tentative interpretations given in this update. Whatever the case, the archaeological research for the African Burial Ground will seek to be one voice retelling the story of the 427 African ancestors that struggled and died so that we may live. Pocket knives and quartz crystals in graves, marine shells from burial contexts, an ox-shoe at the foot of a burial, and broken ceramics on the coffin lid are all powerfully charged personal possessions that weave the fabric of a story that has been marginalized by history and now must be told.



AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND PROJECT PROFILE

SISTERS UNITED RUNS BLACK HISTORY MONTH CONTEST WITH AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND STAMP PETITION

by Rhondea M.C. Williams

Sisters United, based in Newark, New Jersey, is a youth group for young ladies between the ages of 9-18 years old under the umbrella of the Newark Adult Youth Drug Prevention Partnership Program (NEW DAY) of the Simmons Scholarship & Community Service Corporation. The founder of NEW DAY and Executive Director, Reverend Dr. Perry Simmons, Jr., is the pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church, Newark. NEW DAY focuses on saving minority youth from the dangers of the streets by offering other alternatives.

The finish of the Math Bowl on Saturday January 31st when the girls of Sisters United walloped the boys of their counterpart group, Men-to-Boyz/Boyz-to-Men, with a winning score of 12 to the opponents 6, started another competition -- **The African Burial Ground (ABG) Stamp Petition Contest.** Organized during February, the month traditionally celebrated as Black History Month, this contest was among the Little Sisters of Sisters United. They'd already walloped the boys and were ready to test their mettle with each other.



Left: Rhondea M.C. Williams, Director of Sisters United, receives an award of recognition for organizing a highly successful stamp petition drive. She became a volunteer for the African Burial Ground Project in 1997.

Below: Some of the Little Sisters who gathered signatures for the commemorative stamp are from left: Mishael Crawford, 3rd prize winner, Jasmine Ali, 1st prize winner, J'anelly Franklin, 2nd prize winner, Dominique Murray and Tanita Murray. They received certificates of recognition from Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson, at far right. Photo credit: Chadra D. Pittman



Given a copy of the contest rules, a summary of the purpose of the stamp petition issued by the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground (OPEI), and three petitions to start, the Little Sisters were off and running faster than the riders of the Pony Express that made history during America's late 1800s. Speeding across the plains of Missouri to the gold-rush fields of California, mail was delivered in record time for that past period in America's history.

The Little Sisters were ready to make some history of their own, today in America's present. They had no desire to deliver the mail -

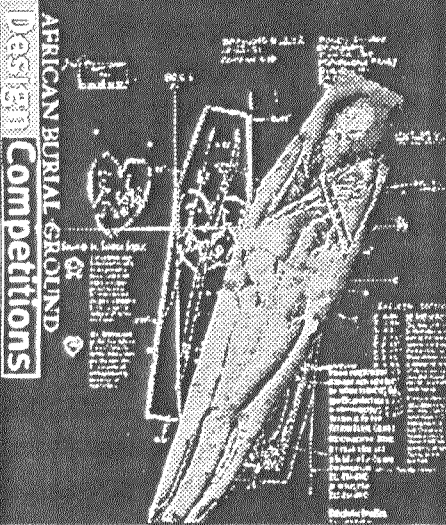
their desire was to stamp the mail with the African Burial Ground Commemorative Stamp Series, preserving the history and heritage of Africans and their descendants here in America by employing the principle of Umoja (unity) and engaging in a combined effort to make the ABG Stamp Series a reality. After all, Black History is being made everyday and they intended to be a part of it.

Thirteen Little Sisters submitted petitions for the contest with a grand total of 1,700 + signatures. The winners include Jasmine Jack submitted 91, Jasmine Curry 80, Natalia Majette 68, and Sharelle Thomas 21.

(continued on page 11)

MEMORIALIZATION UPDATE

From the Office of the Project Executive Peggy King Jorde



Brochure furnished by the Memorialization Office
designed by S&S Graphics, Inc. NYC

By Stephen D. Coleman

Public Forums Scheduled for Wednesday, June 17, 1998:

These Forums will be a unique opportunity for the broader community to relate their recommendations and ideas for the African Burial Ground Interpretive Center to the finalists scheduled to be announced by early June (see item below). The Center will serve as the visitor's entree to the African Burial Ground's past and contemporary histories. ***The tentative locations for the Forums are The U.S. Courthouse (12 - 2 p.m.) and the The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (6 - 8 p.m.). The format of each forum will be identical. Admission is free and seating will be on a first-come, first-served basis.*** Please call our office to confirm locations, times, etc. A Public Survey will be circulated before and during the Public Forum to solicit your specific ideas about the content and design goals for the Interpretive Center. ***Please call our office for a copy of the survey or if you can volunteer to help us disseminate surveys.***

African Burial Ground Memorial Symposium Held Feb. 4, 1998

On February 4, 1998, a symposium on the design for the African Burial Ground Memorial was held in New York City at the Van Alen Institute. The Van Alen Institute, a 100 year old civic design organization, co-sponsored the event which hosted a total of approximately 90 competitors and community members.

The evening opened with comments from the distinguished African American scholars, architects, and arts specialists who will provide recommendations to the General Services Administration in its efforts to select the winning design team for the Memorial design. The discussion was lively and the response from the community and competitors has benefitted the project greatly. Special thanks to the staff of the Van Alen Institute and the OPEI staff for their invaluable assistance.

Interpretive Center Competition Finalists to be announced:

At press time, an announcement of the selected competitive range of not more than five best qualified design-build teams for the Interpretive Center design is expected in early June. The Center will be located adjacent to the African Burial Ground Memorial site, and within the federal office building at 290 Broadway in the City of New York. The U.S. General Services Administration anticipates announcing the final award by late 1998.



For further information, please contact:

Peggy King Jorde, Project Executive
26 Federal Plaza, Room 1605, New York, N.Y. 10278

Telephone: (212) 264-6949; fax: (212) 264-4082;
e-mail: peggy.king-jorde@gsa.gov



African Burial Ground Update

Emilyn L. Brown

Update on the Skeletal Biology at Howard University

Dr. Michael L. Blakey, Scientific Director of Howard University's Bio-anthropology Laboratory, indicates that the staff has entered substantial statistical data about the 427 remains recovered from the site into their computer database. Based on computer analysis, the team reports that nearly 50% of observed injuries are the result of labor intensive tasks. Although the number of men and women are nearly equal, men show nearly twice the number of work related pathologies than do women. Other laboratory tasks include a continuation of dental assessments on the skeletal remains, and the cleaning, reconstruction, inventory and measurements of thirteen of the 25 fungal infested skeletons.

In keeping with the stated research goal of determining where individuals from the African Burial Ground originated, Dr. Shomarka Keita has compared the craniometric measurements of 29 individuals from the site with other African groups and believes that the closest population affiliation is to the Asante or other Akan speaking people from Ghana.

Finally, Dr. Blakey wanted to advise Update readers that recent feasibility studies conducted by Dr. Matthew George and Dr. Rick Kittles have identified positive potential for the type of DNA research specified in the G.S.A. approved research design for this project.

□ African Burial Ground Short Story Contest. At the close of the contest OPEI had received a number of entries primarily from elementary school children. The judges for the contest are as follows: Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson, OPEI; Cynthia Copeland, N.Y. Historical Society; Dr. Martia Goodson, Baruch College; Joan Maynard, Weeksville Society; Dr. Willie Page, Brooklyn College; Ms. Phyllis Murray, Librarian at P.S. 74, Dr. A.J. Williams-Meyer, SUNY @ New Paltz; Miriam Francis, ABG former Federal Steering Committee; Dr. Andrew Jackson, Langston Hughes Cultural Center; Christopher Moore, Schomburg Center for Research; Sharon D. Wyeth, author; Barbara Muniz, Black American Roots; and Dr. Joe Jackson, Blue Nile Rites of Passage @ Abyssinian Baptist Church. Winners of the contest will be announced in the next issue of Update.

□ New Commemorative Artwork at 290 Broadway
"Renewal" by Tomie Arai is the first of three new commemorative artworks to be installed at 290 Broadway. Created to honor the men, women and children of the African Burial Ground, Tomie's work is a black, gold, red and green silk

screen mural measuring 38 feet long and 7 and 1/2 feet high. "It was my intention to create a meditative space in the lobby which would encourage passerby to reflect on the lives of the people who were buried there and recognize the importance of the African Burial Ground as a sacred site," the artist commented. "Renewal," retells the story of New York's early African population, spanning the time period of the 1600s through 1827. The images have been arranged as if they were pulled from an archaeological excavation to affirm a much neglected history. Some images are symbolic, like the mountain rising from the water to remind us of New York's infamous role as a port of entry for enslaved Africans.

There is also an 18th century map showing the original boundaries of the African cemetery, and a brick foundation representing the city's growth and prosperity which flowed from African labor. Historical individuals and institutions including the first indigenous people of the region, the Lenape, and institutions such as A.M.E. Zion, the African Free School and Freedom's Journal are also part of the artistic landscape.

The title, "Renewal," makes an important statement about what Tomie says is "The next stage in the life cycle. When a stage in the cycle of life is disrupted and when our connections to the past have been erased, it is difficult to continue with a sense of purpose and meaning. Coming to terms with the past and recovering our true histories is part of a healing process which enables us to embrace the present and share a strengthened and renewed vision for the future."

□ Human Rights and the African Burial Ground

Ted Eagans a Los Angeles based lawyer and one of the founders of LEVI Inc. and Imam Muhammad Hatim, an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) engineer and UN NGO representative of the Admiral Family Circle Islamic Community, have won wide spread recognition for their work in the arena of human rights, particularly as it relates to African Americans.

At a recent EPA workshop Eagans explained, "The African Burial Ground offers the most practical way of pressing for human rights since African people were in this burial ground before there was a United States." He also stated that gaining international recognition for the site through inclusion on the world heritage list (see Heidleberg article Update No. 5), addressing the question of who "owns" the remains of enslaved and free Africans buried at the site, and working towards appropriate memorialization are all part of this same issue. Stressing the need for the same type of community control exercised by Native Americans in relation to their burial sites, Eagans reminded the audience that reinterment is only 24 months away. "There are very few times in your life that you will have the opportunity to become involved in a project that has perpetuity," he concluded.

Related Items:

☐ The Middle Passage Monument

"If the Atlantic were to dry up today, we would see a trail of human bones stretching from Africa to the New World. The bones of our ancestors are at the ocean's bottom. It is only fitting that we place a monument which pays tribute to them where they are." Wayne James, a graduate of Georgetown University, highly acclaimed fashion designer and lawyer, was explaining his motivation for organizing the Middle Passage Monument Project. There are two public components to the Project. The first involves a design competition for artists to create an appropriate design for the monument using any creative form including poetry, painting, fabric design, jewelry making, sculpture or music. Five replicas of the monument will be created for placement on land in North America, South America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa. One of the five sites chosen will be 427 miles due east off the coast of New York City in honor of the 427 men, women and children excavated from New York's African Burial Ground. Fifty thousand dollars will be awarded to the artist whose work is chosen by a panel of twelve world-renown artists. The deadline for submission is September 1, 1998.

The second component involves a writing project for students. Poetry, essays, or short stories of any length will all be considered as long as they relate to the Middle Passage. James hopes to generate more scholarship on African history, to encourage greater awareness of the horrors of the transatlantic trade, and for young people to "see the world as one, global community, thereby inspiring them to take active positions against present and future violations of human rights wherever they occur. First prize awards of \$2,000 will be awarded to students aged 10-13, \$3,000 for those aged 14-17, and for college students aged 18-21, a first prize of \$5,000.

The Foundation has received strong endorsements from Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the U.N. and New York City Borough President C. Virginia Fields. **For information contact: The Homeward Bound Foundation at their toll free number: 888-334-9229, or tel. no. (202) 333-0911 or (202) 362-7684. The e-mail address is a10jp10@aol.com**

☐ Forgotten Souls: Hartford's Ancient Burying Ground

A group of Hartford students have rediscovered an African Burial Ground in their city and have begun fundraising in order to place a monument at the neglected site. The students involved ---- Andriena Baldwin, Chris Hayes, Kerrian James, Monique Price, Keisha Reid, Juanita Richardson, and Billie Vaughn ---- thoroughly researched the site using the resources of the Connecticut State Library and the Connecticut Historical Society (see photo above). After examining death records, manuscripts, and colonial newspapers the students learned that the site contained the remains of more than three hundred African Americans.

To acknowledge the contributions of this forgotten population, they have created an educational slide presentation



Above: Dr. Sherrill D. Wilson congratulates Hartford students from left to right: Monique Price, Andriena Baldwin, Chris Hayes and Billie Vaughn in recognition of their research of the Ancient Hartford Burying Ground. Photo credit: Emilyn L. Brown

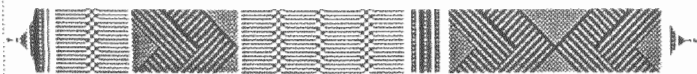
about the site which they use for fundraising. The students anticipate raising enough money to erect a proper monument at the site in October, 1998. **To send donations, or receive information, contact Ms. Billie Anthony at (860) 243-3933 or write c/o Ancient Burying Ground, African American Monument, P.O. Box 231257, Hartford, CT. 06123-1257. E-mail address: sunnyboy@neca.com**

☐ **The People's History Project** ---- The purpose of Senate Bill No. 6574-A, recently introduced by Senator David A. Paterson, is to enable historical societies, ethnic groups, school children, churches and other organizations to nominate historical sites, or events and persons associated with such sites, for inclusion in the People's History Project. Nominated sites would then receive a marker explaining its historical significance. The incentive for introducing the Bill, according to the Senator, is that it will help to correct past omissions. "Many of our present historical sites and history as it is taught in our schools fails to take into consideration many of the groups who have contributed to our history. It is time that we recognize those from every background who have contributed to the history of this State," he explained. The Bill will also impact the education law, making it possible to include nominated individuals, historical events or places within New York State's educational curriculum.

Urging all interested parties to help generate support for its passage, Senator Paterson expressed the belief that "Giving such recognition will foster a new source of pride and create new role models for all people."

For a list of public officials to write to, or for further information about the Project, please call Senator Paterson's New York City Office at (212) 961-8500.

COMMUNITY VOICES



OPEI volunteer Dr. Martia Goodson, a professor at Baruch College, regularly invites public educators from the African Burial Ground to her classes in Black Studies. Like many other educational groups, her students received a slide lecture which was followed up with a tour of the Foley Square Laboratory and a site visit to the African Burial Ground. For this issue of Update we decided to publish excerpts from her students' essays because they express strong viewpoints concerning the historic site.

Nero K. McIntosh

I feel strongly that the remains of the deceased should be reburied at the site in order to give them the dignity and respect that is so long overdue. However, the artifacts can be used as an important educational tool to expose more people to the real history of colonial New York by making that history accessible to as many people as possible. To "re-learn" about the lives of those involved in early colonial New York history is not only our obligation, but to teach this history to others is imperative. By maintaining and treating the artifacts with both the awe and respect they deserve, the African Burial ground and the role it played will become an intrinsic part of our history.

Helen Wright

In my opinion, the most important findings would be where the Africans originated from. This discovery would put another piece of our past into the puzzle so that eventually we may be able to see the big picture. Unlike American blacks, the Africans in the Caribbean, especially my island have no connection to their past. It is as if slavery never existed and that Africa plays no significant part in us being who we are. In fact, many people say that there is no mother country because we were not born there and as such, it does not have any real meaning to us as a people now. I personally have always felt as if there was a missing link in my family.

There can be no future without a past and although we may have been in different countries, *our* ancestors came from a concentrated area on one continent. This site will bring exposure to the fact that our ancestors were a major part of the development of the Americas.

Karina Chen

The African Burial Ground is such an important history for Africans. So, why isn't it taught in school? We've learned about the Civil War, World War I, and World War II, but why is it that we know so little about the African Burial Ground? We can't make people learn about it in school but we can offer them a chance to learn about the African Burial Ground outside school. The people who don't want the African Burial ground to be forgotten should organize their own group. If they want the African Burial Ground to be heard world wide, they have to take the first step in starting a group. Like planting, first the seed has to be put in the soil before the seed becomes a flower.

Rebecca Ortiz

People would probably be more interested in the African Burial Ground if they can see for themselves what the people looked like. They won't just think of the African Burial Ground as a place where old bones pile up. They would be able to see the human faces which would be more effective in reaching the hearts and minds of the future generation. It would give the public an image of what the people of that era might have worn, their culture, diet, and labor. With today's technology, it is possible to reconstruct a person's face. This is something that can be done for the Africans that were buried and forgotten about. Give the African a dignified place in history.

Raun Johnson

I think that these enslaved Africans who were laid to rest from their daily burden and heartache should not have been excavated to do research on. My reason is that the research carried out on the excavated remains of the enslaved Africans will prove only the origins and the diets of the enslaved Africans. This information will help us in no way in the present day or in the future. Nor will it change the past. I think these enslaved Africans are entitled to rest in peace. I think the money that is being used to conduct the research could be used in ways to better the future, and educate the uneducated on the African Burial Ground.



ARE YOU ON OUR MAILING LIST?

Please submit your name and/or corrections to:

OPEI, 6 World Trade Center
U.S. Custom House, Rm. 239
New York, New York 10048

Sisters United and the African Burial Stamp Petition

(Continued from page 6)

The youngest member of Sisters United, Angelica Ceiro, seemed most excited about the contest. She qualified with 57 signatures...an excellent effort for the baby of the group.

In a few cases, it was a family affair of sibling rivalry. Two sisters, Tanita and Dominique Murray, competed with each other. Tanita, the oldest, squeaked through and beat Dominique with a total of 117 signatures to Dominique's 100.

Raquel Washington, part of another double-duo sister-set, outdid her younger sister Denise with 128 signatures to 60. Rasheeda Allen submitted 79 signatures. Her older sister Shaquanda, one of the two Seniors who are members of Sisters United, is a volunteer for the ABG Project and is required to submit petition signatures as part of her Rites of Passage (ROP) activities. Kelly Morris, the other Senior and a ROP participant, is also a volunteer for the ABG Project.

The month wore on, the Little Sisters kept going but the end was in sight. The contest deadline was the last meeting of the month, Wednesday, February 25th. The petitions were tabulated. The First Prize Winner of two tickets to the gospel play, "A Mother Cried for Her Children," was ninth grade honor student Jasmine Ali, a long-distance runner at Weequahic High School.

Jasmine is also a member of the Student Council. She dashed to the finish line with a track record of 396 signatures. Jasmine had

almost twice as many signatures as her closest competitor and Second Prize Winner, 11 year old Ja'nelly Franklin. Ja'nelly, who has shown great improvement academically for the last reporting period, submitted a most commendable 200 signatures and won gift certificates for two to the movie of her choice. The Third Prize Winner, Mishael Crawford, a 9 year old, was certainly no slouch and ran an impressive third with 160 signatures. Mishael will be enjoying the soulful sounds of Witness and Gospel Skate on CD.

Continued from page 9

□ The Interfaith Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage

A planned pilgrimage, initiated by the Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist Order, is being made to offer "prayers for the spirits of people of African descent." This will be accomplished through a reverse movement back to Africa with pilgrims walking and traveling by boat to symbolize the concept of "giving back" honor and respect destroyed by centuries of enslavement.

The Pilgrimage will begin May 30, 1998 and conclude in Cape Town, South African May, 1999. Organizers are seeking participants and volunteers from all faiths to join their walk, or to help support its goals. For further information please write or call: **The Interfaith Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage, c/o First Congregational Church, Room 11, 165 Main Street, Amherst, MA., 01002(413) 256-6698.**

□ Black New Yorkers/

Black New York. In 1898, the five boroughs -- Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, Manhattan and the Bronx -- merged to become New York City. One aspect of the commemoration of the 100 year anniversary of the City's consolidation is currently being organized by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.

Our young people need to know that they can make a difference in their communities just as the combined efforts of the African community in the metropolitan area, the U.S. and the world, has made possible the commemoration of the African Burial Ground. They need to know that they are not helpless in the face of incredible odds and with a combined, united effort, anything is possible for them. All of the participants deserve kudos for their efforts. I am extremely proud of these young ladies.



Designed to give recognition to the lives of African Americans who have made New York City their home over the last century, exhibitions, and special cultural and educational programs are part of the planned celebration. **For further information call or visit the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 515 Malcolm X Boulevard, NYC, (212) 491-2040.**



OPEI 1998 MINI-CALENDAR

Sat., June 20
African Burial Ground Film Festival

Sat., July 18
Summer Educators Symposium

Sat., August 22
Open to the Public

Sat., Sept. 19,
Volunteer Training

Sat., Oct. 24
African Burial Ground Film Festival

Sat., Nov. 21
Fall Educators Symposium

Call (212) 432-5707 for Reservations and Information.



1998 OPEI Activities



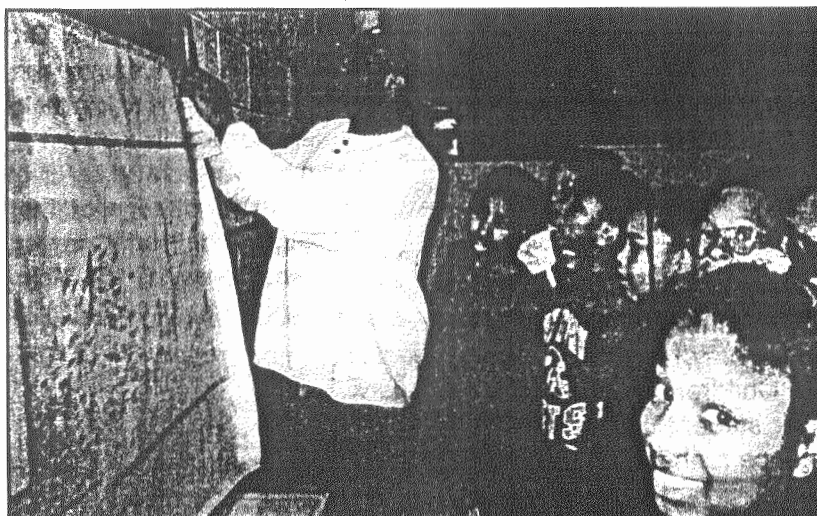
Public Educator Donna Cole was on hand to provide an historic overview of the African Burial Ground for attendees at American Express's Black History Month Celebration in February. Photo credit: Tamara R. Jubilee-Shaw



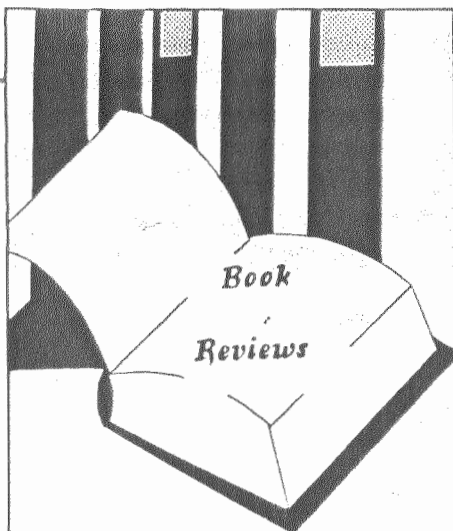
King Nana Agyei-Bi Boamoanpong of Apatrapa in Ghana paid a visit to OPEI during March and was taken on a laboratory and site tour. Photo credit: Arlene T. Jones



*Sankofa --
Return to the past in
order to build the future.*



There were nearly 100 attendees at our annual Youth Symposium held in March. Above: Public Educator Deinabo George talks to young visitors to the Foley Square Laboratory about artifacts and burials recovered from the African Burial Ground. Photo credit: Tamara R. Jubilee-Shaw



Book: Rockland County, N.Y. in the 1790's
Author: Jacquetta M. Haley
Publisher: The Historical Society of Rockland County
Reviewer: Sherill D. Wilson, Ph.D.

Jacquetta M. Haley's account of everyday life in 18th century lower Hudson Valley documents the presence of a diverse population which includes both Africans and Native Americans. The book was published on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the establishment of the county.

Using the available records i.e. federal census materials, tax assessments, school lists, deeds, wills, bills of sale, and personal diaries, Haley provides the reader with a strong sense of the everyday concerns and activities of residents of 18th century Rockland. The book outlines the history of New York State's smallest county from its origin in 1798, and its population beginning with the earliest settlements in 1683.

Life in Rockland County is depicted by Haley as an agricultural community which, "revolved around the seasons, not the clock, and the weather, not an inflexible schedule." As a farming community, the

skills needed by the residents were common to farming communities anywhere in colonial America. Land and labor to work the land was essential to the prosperity of the county. Africans, largely enslaved, were a vital part of that labor force.

According to Haley, "In 1790, Africans, the overwhelming majority of whom were enslaved, made up 8% of the total population of the area that would become Rockland County in 1798. By 1800, Africans accounted for 10% of the population of Rockland. Next to land, these [enslaved Africans] were among the most valuable forms of property owned by Rockland's residents..."

Haley's brief work takes an exceptional approach in documenting the often forgotten African presence, enslaved and free in Rockland. She also discusses the economic and cultural influence of slavery in the lives of the county's residents.



Book: The Dutch Triangle: The Netherlands and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, 1621-1664
Author: Willie F. Page
Publisher: Garland Pub., Inc.
Reviewer: Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D.

Dr. Willie F. Page's 1975, NYU doctoral dissertation, The Dutch Triangle: The Netherlands and the Transatlantic Trade, 1621-1664 was revised and published in 1997, as a recent addition to the Garland dissertation series on Africans in the North edited by Graham Hodges. Dr. Page intends this revised edition to serve as a text for undergraduate and graduate students in African and African American History.

Dr. Page's exploration of the Dutch entry into and participation in the transatlantic slave trade provides fascinating detail for scholars of African New York history. His analysis of the formation and history of the Dutch West India Company illuminates the relations between Africans, indigenous people and Europeans in the triangular trade: Europe-to-Africa-to the Americas. He also illustrates the Spanish influence on the nature of Dutch African enslavement in New Netherlands, Brazil, Guiana and the Caribbean. According to Dr. Page, the Dutch were involved in the trade as early as 1510. However, serious large scale involvement is not noted until about 1615. Dr. Page comments on that involvement:

Dutch treatment of Africans in New Netherlands will be thoroughly investigated...However, the Dutch need not be singled out as the only devils in the slave trade. The evil trade was perpetuated by Africans, Danes, Dutchmen, English, Frenchmen, Genoese, Germans, Portuguese, Spaniards, Scots, and even Latvians. There are also references to Croatians, and Moravians in some early colonies. Animists, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, and Protestants all took part in the com-modious enterprise.

Dr. Page's work also examines the English/Dutch conflicts that led to the English takeover and occupation of New Netherlands in 1664. The text concludes with a highly informative chapter on "Africans in New Netherlands, outlining the historical relationship between Dutch, Africans, and indigenous peoples occupying New Amsterdam. The inclusion of charts in the text, such as the chart of the land patents granted to Africans between 1630-1664, makes this a highly readable volume.



TALKING WIND

I GROW AS I LISTEN TO ANCESTRAL
WINDS BLOW.

IF ANCESTORS ARE DEAD WHY DOES
THEIR VOICE ECHO N MY HEAD?

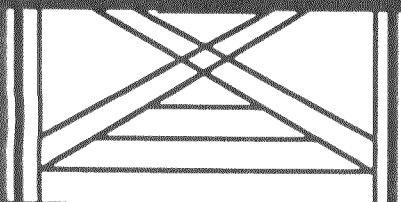
AS THE TALKING WIND BLOWS
WISDOM IS SPREAD AND YET GENERA-
TIONS ARE MISLED. SOMETHING ANCES-
TRAL WIND SAID WASHED MY HEART OF
ALL DREAD. LISTEN! "THERE IS NO DEATH.
ONLY A CHANGE N THE VIBRATION OF
BREATH". BREATH IS THE ESSENCE OF
LIFE. YET MANY ARE TORMENTED BY
WINDS OF STRIFE! THE AIR GROWS STALE
AS WE FAIL TO BALANCE NHALE XHALE.

ANCESTRAL WISDOM IS SPREAD LIKE
SEEDS N THE WIND. IF U LISTEN TO
TALKING WIND U JUST MIGHT
TRANSCEND. JUST FOR TODAY LISTEN AS
THEY SAY

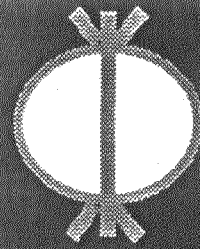
"PEACE WILL PREVAIL ONCE U LIFT THE VEIL".

FOR THE TRUTH CAN ONLY BE REVEALED
TO THOSE WHO WANT TO SEE. THE KEY IS
SIMPLICITY. SO IF I WERE U I WOULD LIS-
TEN TO THE WAY ANCESTRAL WINDS
BLOW, BECAUSE THEY HAVE ANSWERS
TO WHAT U SEEK TO KNOW.

INKOSI M. KIMAATHI ©1998



MFRAMMADAN --- An Adinkra symbol for a house built to with-
stand strong wind -- represents fortitude and preparedness



WAWA ABA --- Seeds of the wawa tree
An Adinkra symbol representing
hardiness, toughness and perseverance.

"The African Trade."

On the way to India from Lisbon -
Traveling by way of sea for spice -
Portuguese sails came upon Africa.
And they let loose a reign of strife.

Along the Atlantic coast of the Continent -
From Guinea to the Cape of Good Hope -
The Portuguese with their commercial contracts...
Ensnared the natives in their subtle ropes.

Trade us this and that -
Buy and sell, today -
And we'll all reap a profit...
Was the message of the day.

And so Ivory, gold and palm oil...
Were exchanged for cloth, weapons and salt;
And as business spread its tendrils,
New trade in the enslaved would do a waltz.

Human livestock headed westward...
Towards the bustling New World ports.
And wetted greedy merchants' lips...
For profits downed like perky snorts.

Trade us this for that -
Buy and sell, today -
And we'll all reap a profit...
Was the message of the day.

From the Burlal Grounds of New Amsterdam...
To the forgotten cemeteries of Brazil,
The spirits of the entombed
Will not remain quiet and still.

Mines and, yes!, plantations...
Took their toll, they cry,
After the horrendous crossing...
In which so many died!

Mario Armando Maldonado © 12/13/97

**PETITION FOR AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND
COMMEMORATIVE STAMP SERIES STATUS**

We the undersigned parties, who are committed to the recognition and preservation of the heritage of Africans and their descendants in the Americas, request that the African Burial Ground in the National Historic District of New York be recommended for the Commemorative Stamp Series status and approved by the Postmaster General.

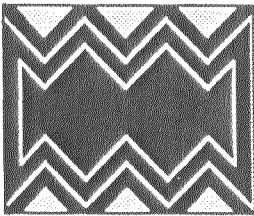
There is no age requirement to sign the petition

NAME (Please Print Clearly)	COMPLETE ADDRESS Number, Street, Apt. #	City	State	Zip

Return to: Office of Public Education & Interpretation
of the African Burial Ground
6 World Trade Center
U.S. Custom House, Room 239
New York, N.Y. 10048

Tel. (212) 432-5707 Fax (212) 432-5920

Please return as soon as possible.
All Petitions must be returned by June 1, 1998



Office of Public Education and Interpretation
of the African Burial Ground
U.S. Custom House
6 World Trade Center, Rm. 239
New York, N.Y. 10048

ADDRESS

